



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

of research. It is quite time we had outgrown the superficial modes of instruction and attainment, through which, in our national pupilage, we have been passing. It is quite time to "put away," among "childish things," those compends and abridgments, those short cuts and railway passages in the vast domains of literature and science, which are intended to supersede the necessity of mental labor, and to relieve inquirers from the "insupportable fatigue of thought." To all who are sick of such miserable pretences and labor-saving desires we confidently recommend the volumes before us, as a manly and inspiring model of a better intellectual culture, and a signally important means of carrying forward this culture to the best results.

ART. IV. — *Lives of Men of Letters and Science, who flourished in the Time of George the Third.* By HENRY, LORD BROUGHAM. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart. 1845. 12mo. pp. 295.

THERE can be no doubt that Lord Brougham, however he may be estimated in future times as a statesman, will figure as one of the most remarkable men of the age in which he lives. He is chiefly distinguished for his restless, impatient, feverish activity of mind, a trait not common among the sons of men, few of whom have any quick spring of action within to drive them to incessant exertion, but generally require external inducements of interest or passion to bring forth all their powers. As an orator, he has appeared preëminent among the great, — exerting a mighty influence in favor of some essential reforms in the government of his country, which, mainly because they were so necessary, were fiercely and bitterly resisted. As a lawyer, he has been popular and successful, though generally allowed to be unsuited to the high judicial station for which he was thought the very man till he had reached it. As a lover of his race, he is ever ready to exert himself in the cause of humanity, and not more savage, perhaps, than is common with the philanthropists of the day. As a man, giving no single impression of his own character, but hurrying on through perpetual changes, where neither

praise nor censure can steadily follow, he has been a willing slave to impulses of any kind, and particularly sensitive to slights and irritations ; jealous of his own standing, and needlessly overbearing in defence of it ; so insolent and vindictive in his usual tone, that self seems always to enter into his assertion of the right or condemnation of the wrong. It is only by an average of merits and failings that one can arrive at any consistent and satisfactory idea of this great and active, but not amiable man, who will hereafter be remembered with wonder certainly, but, if his latter days shall be cast in resemblance of the former, never with admiration or love.

It is well that he has thus put ashore from the troubled sea of politics, to walk on the quiet sands, and gather a few pearls from the beach. For it is clear that he does not require the stimulus of external excitement to bring his mental energies into efficient action. By a necessity of his nature, he must work in one way or another ; and indolence and stagnation being thus out of the question, he might have done as much for the cause of reform and humanity by passionless literary labors, as by those fierce declamations in parliament in which he seems full as intent on scalping his enemies as on defending the great rights of man. No one has a broader discernment of the merits of moral and intellectual questions ; no one is more fearless in battling prejudice or correcting established errors. In these biographical sketches, he states his opinions in a tone more respectful and conciliatory than ever before ; and the reader feels, what indeed is everywhere true, that kindness of manner is an essential grace to open the path to conviction. But how far he might be able to lay permanently aside his former tastes and habits of thought and feeling, — how successfully, after riding the whirlwind and being himself the storm, he might subside into the repose of an autumn day, — how the fierce leader of the opposition would reconcile himself to the patient investigation, unexciting interest, and calm expression which beseeem the literary life, it is not easy to foretell. Little was indicated by his *Lives of Statesmen*, which were nothing more than the history of his battles, with reminiscences of his comrades and foes. Neither are the present sketches sufficiently labored and extended to be the test of success. Proceeding from such a hand, they must of course bear marks of great ability ; but they do not show that any great expense

of time or thought has been given to the subject, nor do they enable us to determine what sort of literary man the Chancellor would have made.

One is not a little surprised, on first entering his gallery of portraits, to encounter the sharp and sarcastic visage of Voltaire, with Rousseau at his side. It is not easy to see the association which connects him with George the Third, either in the way of literature or religion, save that the king was the patron of the Quaker gun with which Dr. Beattie canonaded the skeptics, venerating it as a miraculous piece of ordnance, though it was difficult to discover what execution it had ever done. To say the truth, this collection savors of the taste exhibited in Dryburgh Abbey, where the Earl of Buchan embellished the ruin with busts of Socrates, Sir Isaac Newton, and Paul Jones. At the same time, it is certain that Voltaire did live in the time of George the Third, and, though not among the ornaments of his court or his reign, comes as near as Macedon to Monmouth; and no man can gainsay the right of the noble lord to paint what portraits he pleases. On the whole, it is as well that he did not begin with Johnson, the more natural and prominent figure of the two, and considerably more English than the other; for it is quite clear, from his occasional allusions to the moralist, that he has not that sympathy with "brave old Samuel," which would give him power to understand him. He expresses great contempt for the sage's want of manners; — a deficiency, however, not confined to that diseased and sorrowful man, since, if report speak true, it is not quite supplied in some high places in England even to the present day.

Lord Brougham is above the affectation of paradox in dealing with Voltaire. He does not, according to the taste which so great a genius as Carlyle has the merit of introducing, call upon us to do reverence to him as a Christian, saint, and martyr. But he takes an ingenious view of the subject, contending that whoever does not believe in a God cannot be guilty of blasphemy against him, however he may shock the religious sentiments of men. But Voltaire was no atheist; and in his defence, the Chancellor maintains, that, not believing in the divine mission, perhaps not in the existence, of the Saviour, he cannot be chargeable with impiety on account of his ridicule of Christ and his religion, while, at the same time, he may be guilty of insult and irreverence

towards men, by his profane abuse of those subjects which they hold most sacred and nearest to their hearts. Perhaps there is some confusion of thought generally prevailing in relation to this matter ; but the feeling is sufficiently well defined, and it is in substance this ; that, whether a man believes in the Christian religion or not, there are principles and affections which have claim to the deepest respect from every good heart. Of these the Author of Christianity was, as none deny, the best presentment and illustration. Whoever can find it in himself to treat this person with contempt can have no sympathy with these principles and affections ; and it is on this account, not because he was not convinced by the arguments in favor of the divine origin of the religion, that Voltaire has been regarded with so much aversion in the Christian world.

At the same time, we must remember the circumstances under which his impressions of Christianity were formed. It was probably identified in his mind with a worldly and licentious priesthood, who, though notorious infidels themselves, were believed to have the power of pardoning the transgressions of others, while their own lives were passed in the lowest depths of sin. Surrounded, as religion was in his view, with doctrines the most offensive to reason, and connected with practices the most revolting, it must have been a clear mind and heart which could look through the thousand folds of corruption that bound it, and discern the basis of substantial truth and excellence which was then, and is now, the foundation of its strength and the hiding-place of its power. Sharp-sighted as Voltaire was, he was not the man, in his calmest estate, to take the broadest and most philosophical view of moral subjects. His eye was more quick to discern faults and vices, than to discover and do justice to merits and virtues ; so that, supposing his life had passed in quiet, he would not have been likely to see the form and expression of Christianity through the disguise which it wore. But when we remember that his life, or rather his earlier life, was passed in storm and tempest ; that he was painfully sensitive to every thing like insult and irritation ; that he had the winning ways which are sure to bring a perfect shower of these blessings on his head ; and that, so far from pretending to be insensible, he invited new pelting by making it manifest that every missile told, it is not very sur-

prising, that he did not distinguish carefully between Christianity and Christians ; nor that he should have ascribed to the influence of their religion that venomous spirit of his enemies, who professed to be resenting the wrongs of their faith, while they were in fact avenging their own.

We do not greatly admire the manner which Christians have adopted in their treatment of unbelievers, nor can we wonder that the converts made by it are so few. It very much resembles the tone of the Venerable in Tucker's Vision : — “ ‘ I am suspicious that my boy does not fully comprehend you.’ ‘ No ? ’ said he ; ‘ he must be a blockhead, a numbskull, not to say a beetle, a blunderbuss, if he does not.’ ‘ O, yes,’ said I, ‘ the Doctor has made the matter clear as the sun.’ ” This manner of clearing up difficulties has been the one generally resorted to ; but efficient and decided as it seems, it is far more satisfactory to those who employ it than to the sinners whom it is meant to enlighten ; and we cannot perceive that the tendency to infidelity is materially diminished, vigorously as it has been applied in the Christian world. Strange though it seem, we may rage and fret against infidels, without giving them any vivid idea of the beauty of holiness ; and the more we rate them for their stupid insensibility, the less value do they seem to set on Christian gentleness and love. Moreover, the world has become so accustomed to this manner of dealing with them, that, whenever the Christian advocate opens his lips, they take it for granted that such is his tone. Sympathy, which has thus been sent over to the wrong side, feels for them before they suffer wrong ; if the believer simply says that his opinions differ from theirs, it is taken for grievous persecution ; so that, perhaps from experience of the uselessness, not to say the injurious effect, of their former course, the defenders of the faith may perhaps at last remember the advice of Gamaliel, to which they have paid every compliment except that of minding it : — “ Refrain from these men, and let them alone.”

Lord Brougham takes ground upon the subject of punishing blasphemy and infidel assaults upon religion, contending, and he is confirmed by all experience in his position, that all such revenge, for it is little better, always does more harm than good ; a fact sufficiently attested by the state of things in his own land, where such writings have been kept in demand by their being thus outlawed ; while in this country, where they

are neglected by the law, they die of themselves with marvellous expedition. Every attempt to sustain religion in the same way on this side the sea has invariably resulted in giving notoriety and a degree of sympathy to those who would have been long enough in obtaining it by any merits of their own. We are here informed, that Wilberforce was opposed to all prosecutions for offences of this kind, rightly judging, that the Rock of Ages could stand of itself, and it was but dishonored when it had the appearance of receiving support from the arm of power. It is rather strange, that, when the best and wisest friends of Christianity have so long been of this opinion, their influence should not have had more effect ; for it is not a new impression. Jeremy Taylor says, that force thus applied can only make a hypocrite, and every time this is done, " instead of erecting a trophy to God and true religion, we build a monument to the devil," — a piece of sepulchral architecture as unnecessary as it is undeserved ; since, if it be true that having one's own way is favorable to long life, and these means of sustaining religion are certainly such as that potentate most enjoys, there is no prospect of his requiring these obituary honors for some time yet to come.

But all that can be said of the folly of persecuting those who reject Christianity will not excuse Voltaire. His character is not cleared by pointing out the sins of his opposers ; and there is doubtless an impression made and sustained by his life and writings, that, while he had sagacity enough to see what Christianity really was through all the cloud of its corruptions, his heart was not in harmony with its spirit. There was nothing within him which answered to its voice ; and it was not so much ignorance of its true character, as a want of sympathy with it, which made him so willing to undermine its foundations in the minds and hearts of men. In the "*Pucelle d'Orléans*," which is commonly regarded as the most spirited and able of his works, bringing out in full energy those peculiar talents in which no one ever exceeded him, there is a taste for indecency so evidently hearty and inbred, so ostentatiously paraded in every part, with such a perfect indifference to the detestable lessons he was teaching, that all the manly spirit and generous feeling which appeared in other passages of his life seem like irregular and transient impulses, and we are persuaded that

we have here the true presentment of his soul. And sensual, selfish, and detestable assuredly it is ; full of savage sneers at every thing high and holy ; revelling with disgusting satisfaction in those subjects on which few can bear to look ; and exerting all the might of a powerful but depraved imagination to efface the lines of separation between vice and virtue, glory and shame. It is true, there are other works of his which would give a different impression ; but he was several years in writing this, and it is evidently the free and natural outpouring of his heart. Is any injustice done to Byron by looking to *Don Juan* as a true portrait of the man ? Is not Rousseau to be seen in his “ *Confessions*,” through the fancy dress which he endeavours to wear ? These, like the “ *Pucelle*,” were the most hearty efforts of the writers ; if they give wrong impressions of the several sources whence they originated, the authors have none but themselves to blame ; and surely none would expect a pure religion to find a warm welcome in such spirits as theirs. It is true, there are certain authorities who would persuade us that a delight in filth is a thing of the outside merely, and should be no disparagement to a poet’s claim to be accounted great and good. But they only succeed in giving an unsavory impression of themselves ; for, luckily, there are such things as common sense and common decency, and while this is the case, the world will never believe them.

It seems ridiculous enough to pretend that Voltaire was a self-forgetful friend of humanity ; for, though he made vigorous resistance to oppression, it so happened that all the while he was fighting his own battles, and avenging his own personal wrongs. In his time, the gilt and pasteboard figure-head of royalty was in the front of the vessel of state, and men were under the amazing delusion, that the image directed its motion, and gave it most of its power. Nothing could exceed the subserviency with which intellectual men bowed down before it. A great poet, after the representation of one of his own plays, ventured to ask, as the king was passing, “ *Is Trajan satisfied ?*” and when Trajan, whose opinion was worthless, even if he had activity of mind enough to form one, thought proper to hide his stolidity under the form of displeasure, and refused to notice the question, the poet thought it necessary to die of a broken heart.

Voltaire was a man of stronger spirit ; and, truly, he had

enough to provoke a more patient man, in the poor and vexatious injuries which the court was constantly inflicting upon him. After the death of Louis the Fourteenth, he was imprisoned, without trial, for some libel on the memory of that prince, which he was falsely charged with writing. After having been beaten by a poor creature of a courtier, or rather by his servants, Voltaire ventured to send him a challenge ; and for this breach of the privilege of men of rank to be base and cowardly, he was obliged to fly to England to escape the Bastile. As to his quarrels with individuals, which were numberless, he could not complain of the hot water in which he lived, since it was he himself who heated it ; but in his intercourse with his superiors, as they are so absurdly called, he appears to have thought it a proper concession to their rank, that they should have most of the blame to themselves. This was particularly true in regard to Frederic of Prussia, one of those pests of mankind who are complimented with the name of Great ; a man of great talents, certainly, but in private life a mixture of the monkey and savage, and, like one of Fielding's characters, carrying a bit of flint about with him by way of heart. His treatment of the poet was a compound of flattery and jealous dislike ; he had sense enough to know Voltaire's immense superiority to himself in all intellectual pretension, and meanness enough to hate him for it. He appeared to think as if, by pulling down Voltaire, he could elevate himself ; as if, by causing the hangman to throw the poet's writings into the fire, he could throw some fire into his own.

It is inconceivable, that, with the spirit which Voltaire manifested on other occasions, he could have submitted to all manner of abuse and impertinence from Frederic, as he did, not in silence, but with degrading humility, so long as he was within the reach of the wild beast's claws. On the whole, he received but wretched treatment from those who were above him in the social scale ; had he resented it with a thousand times more spirit, he would have been not only forgiven, but worthy of praise. As it was, he did more than any one else, not so much by direct effort as by the brilliancy of his talents, to remove the bar of separation between rank and talent ; a triumph of genius, certainly, though it may be doubted whether either party gains much by being brought nearer to the other.

There were occasions, when Voltaire, forgetting himself, and having no personal interest in the subject, went forward in the cause of justice and humanity with intrepidity and power. The case of Calas is an example, — an old Calvinist, whose son, shortly after becoming a Catholic, committed suicide by hanging himself. A fanatical magistrate threw the whole family into prison, accusing the father, a feeble old man, of the murder of his son, though he had treated with great liberality another son who had become a Catholic, and there was not a shadow of proof to show that he was in any way connected with the deed. The stupid populace took up the prejudice, and raged against the innocent family ; while the court, before which the accused was brought, condemned the old man to be broken alive on the wheel, and the parliament of Toulouse confirmed the proceedings. After this judicial murder, the family applied to Voltaire for aid and protection, which he readily gave them ; and for several years he labored to procure a reversal of the villanous sentence, setting himself against popular prejudice and civil and ecclesiastical power with a courage and ability which gave the Protestants a sense of security which they had not before. He succeeded so far as to save the rest of the family, and to bring them pecuniary compensation for their wrongs. The sentence was reversed, but the parliament unhappily was not forced to acknowledge the justice of the reversal ; whether they had acted like fools or knaves, they were permitted to sustain their reputation, though such deeds could not be repeated.

But we give him all praise for his efforts on this occasion, for it was obviously one in which self was not concerned. The infusion of that element was so overflowing and excessive, that, wherever it came, it seemed to destroy his moral feeling, rendering him incapable of any sustained elevation of character, and showing, that, however sincere his good feeling might be, there was no basis of principle under it, and therefore its duration was not to be trusted. The Abbé des Fontaines had been indebted to him for his escape from a disgraceful charge ; he was a person of scandalous character, and little deserved such friendly interposition. Afterwards, the miserable creature, probably for the sake of gain, wrote a libel on his benefactor, as indeed he did on all who were high enough to be so complimented ; upon which, Vol-

taire, though he fully believed the man's innocence, like all others who knew any thing about the matter, reproduced the false charge, not only in his letters, but in one of his poems, thus endeavouring to seek revenge by repeating an accusation which he himself had shown to be untrue. As to this virtue of truth, he was in the habit of treating it with very distant respect, and without the least approach to familiarity. When his "Letters on England" brought him into trouble, he publicly denied their authorship, and ascribed them to the Abbé Chaulière, who was no longer living to contradict him. Whenever he brought himself into a scrape by his epigrams and lampoons, he made no scruple of disowning them. Though he could not be blind to the injustice of the partition of Poland, still, in his correspondence with Frederic and Catharine at the time, so far from speaking what he thought, he rather complimented those unscrupulous picaroons. Indeed, he went so far as to call the empress's share in it "noble, useful, and just," terms as nearly as possible the exact reverse of the truth, and which no man with a vestige of a conscience, one would suppose, could ever have thought of employing. With facts like these before us, it must be a very resolute and determined enthusiasm which can admire the character of Voltaire, though no one can deny that his great and various powers have rendered good service, in many respects, to the cause of man.

It appears to us, that Lord Brougham, probably from a sense of the injustice which has been done to Voltaire, and a desire to break through the unpleasant associations which his name so generally awakens, has suffered himself to be carried to excess on the opposite side, when he says that there is no one since Luther to whom the human mind is more indebted for release from the bondage of spiritual power. Voltaire's sarcasm and wit were marvellous; his principles generally invisible to the naked eye; his argument sufficiently sparing. There are no instances given of bold defiance of authority, of dangers braved for the sake of conscience, or of earnest eloquence inspired by the truth alone. It was the unselfish intrepidity of the brave Reformer, his doing and daring for defence of the truth, and his lofty disregard of all personal dangers, which make mankind forget his faults, which were many, and exalt him to a place in history glorious, kingly, and commanding. If any things similar to

these can be found in Voltaire's career, they have escaped our observation. His talents, to the full extent of his claims, no one wishes to deny ; but in the moral elements of greatness he was desperately poor ; and his biographer should not suffer himself or others to forget, that character, even with inferior powers, is more likely than the highest ability, without principle, to insure a great and lasting place in the reverence of men.

The next personage drawn by the Chancellor is introduced as a bitter enemy of Voltaire. Among authors, this is a very easy and natural association ; for, while the friendships of the irritable race recorded in literary history are few and small, their quarrels, numberless and eternal, are the burden of almost every page. In this conflict between the man of sarcasm and the man of sentiment, the former was most to blame ; since Rousseau, who was a score of years younger, felt and expressed, at first, great respect for Voltaire, which the latter, who enjoyed such homage, was not slow in returning. But Rousseau took exception at some of his opinions ; and Voltaire, though he declined all argument on the subject, was not pleased to have his judgment called in question, particularly by one who seemed likely to carry a heavier gun in controversy than himself. In sober reasoning neither party excelled ; but Rousseau showed that earnestness and seeming conviction, before which wit can maintain only a light skirmish, and is sure to be driven from the ground. Meantime, Rousseau had taken arms against the theatre, and was supposed by Voltaire to have excited the Genevans against him, partly on that account, and also because of his infidelity, though Rousseau could hardly have preached from that text without bruising his own unbelieving head. The amount of the whole was, that they had become jealous of each other ; Rousseau was wounded by Voltaire's grotesque saying, that, when he read the eulogies on the savage state, he felt an irresistible desire " to creep on all fours " ; and Voltaire felt an apprehension lest the younger pretender might, by dint of earnest eloquence, work his way to a reputation greater than his own. In 1760, Rousseau addressed to him a crazy letter, in which he declared that the Ferney theatricals had made his life a burden to him ; and charged to the Ferney influence his own misery, proscription, and banishment from home. Voltaire never

answered ; the charge betokened too much insanity to admit a reply ; but harmless as the letter was, he resented the want of veneration implied in writing it, and ever after satirized the writer with the greatest bitterness, knowing, without a direct conflict, how to take the deepest revenge.

It is very difficult to form a satisfactory idea of the character of Rousseau ; for though an intense and unmitigated selfishness was the chief element in it, he was at times capable of some display of generosity, where it would sound to his own advantage. For example, he subscribed to the statue of Voltaire, greatly to the discomposure of him to whom the compliment was paid ; and when the old poet, in his last visit to Paris, took with him a tragedy for the stage, which it was anticipated, naturally enough, would prove a failure, Rousseau declared that it would be inhuman and ungrateful in the public not to treat it with respect, whatever its merits might prove to be. The impression given by his life is that he was unsound of mind ; and yet the disease was probably nothing more than that voluntary monomania which any one may bring on by making self the chief consideration and moving principle of all his actions, looking at all things only in a selfish light, and suffering his own shadow to darken every thing on which it is cast. Every feeling, however base, was innocent and holy, if *he* thought proper to indulge it ; any action, however guilty it might have been in another, was excusable, and even meritorious, in *him*. That common self-delusion, by which a man regards himself as a peculiar person, out of the pale of the common law of feeling, amounted in him to an absolution more complete than false religion ever gave ; and his conscience, if he ever had one, the only proof of which was his share in our common humanity, was completely overawed by his towering and stupendous self-applause. This, by a not unusual retribution, became the source of his distress ; he was fully persuaded that the world had nothing to think of, and nothing to do, but to look after him and his motions. If there was anywhere a whisper, a smile, an obscure allusion, or a meaning word, he was sure that it was aimed at him. Thus he brooded over acts of kindness, as well as over things indifferent, till they seemed deadly injuries, and called up hatred and revenge. But strange as this disposition may seem, it will not do to call it insanity. Half the world

have these feelings at times ; they might easily make them permanent by determined indulgence ; and any low-spirited person who abandons his mind to them might become as jealous, as fantastic, as wayward, — in one word, as much of a madman, — as Rousseau.

It is inconceivable how any one can study his works with deep interest after reading his “*Confessions*,” in which, by the way, he resembles certain persons mentioned by Chesterfield, “*who, with a modest contrition, confess themselves guilty of most of the cardinal virtues.*” He says, that in early life he had a habit of lying on all occasions, and his later days, though he asserts the contrary, did not vary altogether in this respect from the former. He makes himself fourteen or fifteen years old when he lived as footman in the service of the Countess de Vercelles, from whom he stole a riband, and, being charged with it, to remove suspicion from himself, accused Marian, a fellow-servant, who had shown much friendship for him, and thus, through his own cowardly selfishness, destroyed the reputation of the poor girl, without the least regard to her tears and appeals to his conscience and manly feeling. He says, that he afterwards felt remorse, when he thought of Marian’s ruin and distress ; but that his attachment for her was the cause of it, for he had stolen it to give to her, and this was what made him think of charging her with stealing it to give to him. Lord Brougham shows that he was probably eighteen, certainly not less than seventeen, years of age, when he was guilty of this heartless deed. His character was then formed, if ever ; and we imagine it would be difficult to find in any cabinet of human remains a harder specimen of moral petrification. Throughout his “*Confessions*,” he is candid to excess in admitting the sins of other people, and in the same manner endeavours to throw a refined and false coloring over his own. The best friend he ever had was Madame de Warens, a generous, accomplished, and attractive woman, though not one of the vestal virgins, — who was so disinterested and faithful, that her strange philanthropy should never have been exposed by him. She endeavoured to procure him orders in the *Church*, but not succeeding, found him a place with Le Maître, the director of the cathedral music, who treated him for a year with the utmost kindness, till he lost his own office in consequence of some differences with the chapter. Rousseau then accom-

panied him to Lyons, where he fell down in an epileptic fit one day in the street, and his grateful pupil took the occasion to slip away, feeling no vocation to remain with one who could serve him no longer. Add to this, his sending five of his own children to the foundling hospital, in spite of the tears of their mother, who, though a coarse creature, was not dead to nature, — and we have an exhibition of selfishness as complete, and with as slight a sprinkling of humanity, as can be found or dreamed of among the sons of men.

There is a belief, in those who know but little of his life, that he was capable of generous actions ; it may have been so ; but whatever they were, his own hand, which made the best of every thing, has not found it convenient to record them. Of generous expressions, which cost nothing, he was more liberal, and he was perfectly prodigal of those fine sentiments which have no particular relation to place or person, and have not so much of pledge or promise in them that he who employs them is ever expected to make them good. He must be an eminent saint in the estimation of those moralists who maintain that one's instincts are always to be followed ; for self was his oracle and law, and there is no instance of a departure from that moral standard on any occasion, if we may except his self-denial in not seeing Madame de Warens in her poverty and sorrow. She had always treated him with the most affectionate kindness, supporting him like a mother for many years of his life, and sharing all her resources with him while she had any to bestow ; and when, through her lavish expenditure and imprudence, she was reduced to the extremity of want, he did not, though he was within a day's journey of where she was, either visit her or write to her, — “because,” as he says, “he feared to sadden her heart with the story of his disasters.” At this, the spirit of the Chancellor, who has maintained unwonted coolness, waxes wrathful within him ; “As if she had not real disasters of her own, — as if the straw on which she was perishing of want offered not wherewithal to touch her more nearly than the tale of his fancied wrongs and trumpery persecutions.” Lord Brougham thinks, that, at one time, he was certainly insane ; if so, the madness was of his own making. There is, however, no more evidence of it at one period than another ; and, as we have said, any jealous man, absolving himself, as Rousseau did, from all moral restraint,

and all concern for the opinion of others, might soon become as wild and extravagant, if not as heartless, as he.

This testimony should be borne whenever his name is mentioned, because, though his "New Heloise," with all its occasional eloquence in the expression of feeling, is too coarse and low to find many who will plead guilty to enjoying it at the present day, the sentimentality which it created and fed still exists, and exerts a fatal influence on many persons, teaching them to take credit for tenderness when their hearts are hard as the nether millstone, and blinding them to the guilt and grossness of every imaginable sin. Many thus parade through life in a fancy dress, thinking themselves the great sublime they draw. They use this sentimentalism like a gauze handkerchief tied over their eyes, which hides from them only what they do not choose to see, and affords an excuse, such as has served Rousseau through two generations, for the unworthy paths in which they go. On the mountain or the deep, they feel a transient emotion of sublimity ; and this, without the shadow of sacrifice or self-denial, is their religion ; and very exalted do they seem to themselves over those who, with a vulgar sense of duty, labor on in the dusty paths on the plain. In matters of benevolence, they are ready to feel for that elegant and interesting distress, of which real life affords so little, though in works of fiction it so much abounds. Since there is no demand in the market of life for such humanity as theirs, they take it out in feeling, — not discovering the unsoundness of the emotion, because it is never brought to the test. Meantime they go on, flourishing white handkerchiefs and shedding sentimental tears, which, as is fully evident to all but themselves, are no more indications of tenderness, than the drops which at nightfall steal down the sides of the shaded rock.

The influence of Rousseau upon literary taste and tendencies has been exceedingly great. The success with which he passed, coarse and selfish as he was, for a man of deep and tender feeling, appears to have been the signal for a procession of writers to withdraw the public attention from their own transgressions by crying out against the oppression of social laws and lamenting the baseness of mankind. We have received letters from inmates of our penitentiaries, in which, after slightly admitting that they might have been imprudent, they spoke with indignation of the unequal hardship

of the law and the cold malignity of all other men. There is something in this tone so consoling and even elevating to him who employs it, that we are not to wonder at the taste spreading into literature,—a republic which, like Texas, owes some part of its population to those who have no reason to love the law. Lord Byron carried on this masquerade with distinguished success, sustaining the character of a much injured man so ably as almost to deceive himself, and entirely to bewilder the sentimental portion of the world. Others, far inferior to him, have also enacted the part of a lion of the day by means of this drapery, though the points of the inferior animal appeared conspicuously through. Under convoy of male and female scribblers of novels, we see murderers, thieves, and ladies of light life and conversation present themselves with easy confidence, assuring us that it is not they, but human laws and moral sentiments, which are answerable for the errors of their lives, — if errors they be, — maintaining that their garments are more beautiful for the stains, and looking on the virtuous as vagrant animals do on those in the pound, with pity approaching to disdain. It should be said, however, that Rousseau was a better man than his followers ; he never appears to have found himself out ; but in them it is evidently matter of shameless calculation to secure gain or notoriety by defying the laws of virtue, and they make this exhibition of themselves with a consciousness of exposure, and without thinking it necessary to put on the least fig-leaf of self-delusion.

It is true, with respect both to Voltaire and Rousseau, that they were dyspeptics, and they may fairly claim all the immunities and exemptions which diseased livers entitle them to demand. But if this plea be generally admitted, like that of insanity in the case of murder, it would be difficult to say who shall be “ whipt of justice,” or how it would be possible to enforce a sentence of condemnation for any sin. For we apprehend that there are few of our readers who have not said with a sigh, “ *O dura messorum ilia !*” or who can think of those birds which digest nails and broken glass with unruffled serenity, without feelings akin to admiration and despair. No doubt, the martyrs of indigestion suffer, and their irritability and vengeance, like charity, begin at home ; having their origin there, they go forth to bless mankind. How far it is possible to suppress them, to what extent they are

excusable, and whether they shall be set down among vices or infirmities, it is not ours to say ; but if morality is to resolve itself into a form of medical jurisprudence, and no man can be censured till the doctor has felt his pulse and examined the state of his system, others as well as literary sinners should have the benefit of it, and the same zeal which is now manifested to do away with capital punishment should extend itself to all penalties of every kind and degree.

The next person who appears in the Chancellor's gallery was distinguished, if any thing so common could be regarded as a distinction, by a quarrel with Rousseau. There may be a doubt, however, whether that could be called a quarrel, which was conducted by one party without the least assistance from the other. A quarrel seldom travels far upon one leg ; and a feud with one so easy and kind-hearted as Hume must needs have proceeded in that inconvenient method, if it went on at all. How such a quarrel could arise appears from the history of the persecution suffered in Neuschâtel by the "self-torturing sophist," who declared that a quarry of stones was thrown into his house at night, endangering his life and filling his household with alarm ; while it was stated by one of his friends, that the instrument of this revenge, found upon the floor the next day, was one solitary flint, and this discovery appears to have been marked by the singular, though not wholly unaccountable, circumstance, that the stone itself was larger than the hole in the glass which it came through. Hume suffered much from his generosity to this "interesting solitary," as he was called by his friends, who seem to have urged the historian to invite him to England, simply in order to keep him out of France. When he arrived, Hume found him a delightful place of retreat, and also procured him a pension. But a letter having been written by that mischief-making animal, Horace Walpole, purporting to be addressed by Frederic to Rousseau, pressing him to come to Berlin, and promising every blessing except those persecutions in which he so much delighted, the sophist, after mature deliberation, thought proper to ascribe this trick to a conspiracy on the part of Hume, and resented it with the utmost fury, even going so far as to throw up his pension, — an act of resignation, however, which he recalled with great expedition.

It is as an unbeliever in the Christian religion that Hume

is generally remembered by those who hear his name ; not only as a skeptic himself, but as the author of those doubts and suggestions, which, reproduced in various forms, still operate to prevent Christianity from finding admission into many minds. But the truth is, that religion, wherever it is found, has generally entered by the avenues of the heart ; and a man of easy good-nature, prosperous in his circumstances, exempt from humiliating and sorrowful changes, honored by the great and esteemed by all around him, free from those relations and responsibilities in life from which our greatest distresses as well as blessings come, was not so likely as others, of different constitution and differently situated, to feel those wants of the soul which that religion is intended to supply. Never fiercely assailed by temptations, he was not compelled to resort to it for strength to resist them ; having no tendency to passion or revenge, he felt no need of its restraining power ; enjoying every moment of the present life as he did, his thoughts were seldom carried forward to another existence ; and as men seldom resort to it till they feel their need of its supports and consolations, it is easy to see why it was that the subject was never brought home to his heart.

We can find in his temperament, then, the reason why he was so indifferent to Christianity, and so careless whether he undermined its foundations in men's minds. For he was not a scoffer ; though there was an occasional tone of bitterness, he never descended into buffoonery like that of Voltaire ; but he evidently did not feel how much men need Christianity, what a blessing it is, and what a disastrous change the loss of its influence would be. He treats it as a subject of metaphysical discussion merely, nor could he understand the mighty argument for its truth which is found in its universal adaptation to the wants and sorrows of mankind. His doctrines are thus carried out as if nothing important was involved, and as if it was simply a gratification of curiosity to see how far they might be made to go. Having shown that miracles are not likely to take place, and that the error or falsehood of witnesses is more common than a departure from the usual order of things, he proceeds to infer that there can be no such thing as a miracle ; which amounts to the assertion, that there is no such thing as Divine Providence, that the power which established is not competent to

alter, and in fact excludes the Deity from all direct concern with the universe which he has made ; — consequences of his argument, which, of themselves, would be enough to show that it could not possibly be true, since they represent the creature as mightier than its creator, and speak of a God whose hands are bound. Lord Brougham remarks, that, had Hume lived to see the late discoveries in fossil osteology, which make it clear that there was at some period an exertion of power to form man and other animals not previously existing, he must either have rejected the science, which would be absurd, or have admitted the interposition of creative power. But this is equally true of the whole universe ; it must either be self-existent, or the time must have been when some power was exerted to bring it into being. Whoever, therefore, is neither atheist nor pantheist, if he admits that the usual order of things has once been suspended, cannot maintain that there is no power to depart from it again.

But without entering into the discussion on the subject of miracles, which has already, at various times and in divers manners, been more than sufficiently extended, considering that the evidence in their favor has convinced clear-headed men without number, while the doubters have been comparatively few, we would simply remark, that most of those who take the skeptical side of this subject, while they think that they get rid of miracles, leave untouched the great miracle of all ; and that is, Christianity itself ; whence did it come ? In tracing the history of other opinions and reforms, we can follow them like rivers to the earthly fountains from which they spring ; we can see the imperfect attempts which went before them, the influences and tendencies which led to them ; their unformed elements may be distinguished long before their living action manifests itself to the world. But here was a religion suddenly breaking out from the midst of darkness, breathing peace in a wild and martial time, teaching the largest charity and freedom from prejudice among a most narrow and bigoted people, resisting the habits of thought and feeling which had always prevailed, and itself giving the first impulse towards that improvement in which it would lead the nations on from glory to glory. It is idle to speak of it as an effort of genius or a happy discovery ; for these are results of efforts and progress previously made,

and no such elements can be found in the ancient world. Now, as nothing can come of nothing, and to every thing must be assigned a cause adequate to produce it, we do not know where to look for any explanation of the existence of this religion but that which regards it as a direct gift of God. The skeptic, then, if he discredits the miracles, by showing to his own satisfaction that they could never have been wrought, cannot deny that Christianity exists and prevails, and thus leaves himself embarrassed with a difficulty greater than that which he explains away.

The character of Hume has often been impeached in general terms, in consequence of his opinions, — Christians having always taken the liberty, in defending their religion, to break all its laws of love. Archbishop Magee, for example, speaks of his writings as “standing memorials of a heart as wicked and a head as weak as ever pretended to the character of a philosopher and moralist”; a remark, which, lacking the essential grace of truth, is of the number of those which bless him who takes considerably more than him who gives, and which rather enlighten us as to the good sense and manners of him who uses them, than of those to whom they are applied. But Lord Brougham has inserted a letter into the appendix to this *Life*, which gives a more unpleasant impression of Hume than we have received from any other quarter. It contains the expression of a wish, that some clerical friend should remain in his profession, which he desired to abandon; for, says the author of the “*Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*,” —

“It is putting too great respect on the vulgar and on their superstitions to pique one’s self on sincerity with regard to them. Did ever one make it a point of honor to speak truth to children or madmen? If the thing were worthy being treated gravely, I should tell him that the Pythian oracle, with the approbation of Xenophon, advised every one to worship the Gods ‘according to the law of the city.’ I wish it were still in my power to be a hypocrite in this particular; the common duties of society usually require it; and the ecclesiastical profession only adds a little more to an innocent dissimulation, or rather simulation, without which it is impossible to pass through the world.”

Such loose talk as this, the recommendation to a friend to be a hypocrite, the wish to be one himself, and the suggestion that duty may sometimes require it, argues an extraordinary

indifference on these subjects, which are commonly regarded as important, whatever may be men's opinions in other respects. Lord Brougham does great injustice to Paley in connecting his doctrine of expediency with any such application of it as this. It is not easy to conceive of a man of any moral principle speaking in this manner while in possession of his reason ; and it is not doing injustice to one who does, to regard it as a sign of certain deficiencies of moral constitution, which would prevent his mind from apprehending the worth and beauty of Christianity, and, to the same extent, forbid its welcome in the heart.

There is another respect in which the great historian is little beholden to his noble biographer. The impression has been, that Hume wrote with great rapidity ; the harmonious and beautiful order of his narrative, and the free and manly grace of expression, indicate that it came from his pen with a swift and easy flow. This circumstance has been regarded as an explanation of many of his errors ; for, admirable as his work is, and delightful to readers as it will ever be, it is wholly discredited as an authority ; no one places the least reliance upon it ; we resort to it for gratification, while we go to inferior writers to know the truth. But Lord Brougham gives the impression, that the act of composition to Hume was laborious and painful ; his manuscripts still in existence are everywhere scored, interlined, and altered ; indeed, he says himself, that he was slow, and not easily satisfied with what he wrote ; a fact which deprives him of the apology, such as it is, which the extemporaneous manner of writing ascribed to him afforded for many of his errors. The Chancellor also declares, that, on some occasions, he sacrificed truth to effect, introducing striking circumstances without foundation, and altering statements from what he knew to be the correct version ; and though these variations from the truth of history, so far as noticed, are not of any great importance, they are still sufficient to show, that his conscience was not strictly delicate, and that, according to the suggestion made to his clerical friend, he considered readers of history as among those inconsiderable persons to whom the truth needs not be told ; either because he thought the article too rare and precious to be wasted, or that the invention of historical facts seemed a nobler and more inviting office than simply to record them.

This distinguished man is generally spoken of as a skeptic ; but Lord Brougham shows that his views come as near to atheism as it is possible for a man not of unholy life to go. Hume contends, not that there are doubts on the subject of God's existence and the immortality of the soul, but that we have no evidence of either, and therefore no ground for believing in God and immortality. And thus with respect to miracles ; his argument maintains that they cannot be proved ; that a divine interposition is a thing impossible ; and of this there is a certainty which no amount of testimony can outweigh. It therefore leads, not to doubt, but to a conviction of the falsehood of the religion which professes to come from on high. Perhaps the reason why he has thus been regarded, as one whose mind was balanced between the two opinions, is, that he never, like Voltaire, entered into a blind and furious warfare against Christianity. His reasonings against it are grave and decent, seldom defiled by unworthy language or feeling. So unlike is this to the bearing of most other infidels, that it gives the impression of undecidedness and neutrality ; when, perhaps, there never was any one to whom the religion could have been presented with so little hope of success, since his regular life, his steady temper, and prosperous circumstances, had prevented his feeling the need of it as most men do ; and when the intellect, which in him was infinitely stronger than the affections, reported against it, no voice in its favor was lifted up by his heart. Even if his views on the subject of our faith had been at first mere speculations, as soon as he published his arguments against it, he came into sympathy with its opposers. Indifference was no longer possible, and it was as an antagonist of Christianity, if not of all religion, that he lived and died.

A statement was thrown out in the "Quarterly Review" many years ago, and we well remember the sensation it created, which represented the papers left by Hume as containing evidence that distinguished ministers of the gospel in Edinburgh were in full sympathy with him, practising on his suggestion with respect to deceiving the public, and having no more real faith than he had in the religion which they professed to preach. This incredible assertion, which doubtless proceeded from some narrow-minded bigot, who regarded false witness against another sect as a virtue, and chari-

ty as a mortal sin, was not corrected at the time ; but Lord Brougham informs us, that he has caused the most exact search to be made, and, finding no confirmation of the story, he gives it an unqualified contradiction.*

One of the clergymen alluded to was Dr. Robertson, who comes next in succession in this biography, and whose life is written with a satisfaction increased, doubtless, by the circumstance that he was connected with the noble lord, whose grandmother was a sister of the historian ; not that more than justice is done to his moral character, but his talents and literary standing are rated somewhat too high. Dr. Robertson was a Christian in character, and therefore a gentleman in his manners ; he did not think himself bound to treat an unbeliever, who never insulted his faith, as a profane and graceless enemy of man. Though he was firm, or perhaps we should say *because* he was firm, in his own conviction, he could look upon one whose opinions were different without the least feeling of hatred and revenge ; in which respect he had the advantage of some over-zealous Christians, both in the peace and happiness of his own temper, and in the influence he exerted to bring unbelieving wanderers home. The calumny here alluded to was doubtless owing to this liberality on his part, misinterpreted by those who consider no one who is not ready to put an infidel to death as entitled to the name of Christian.

Lord Brougham, having a nearer interest in the subject of this biography than in most others, is naturally disposed to

* Notwithstanding this denial, and in full view of the evidence on which it is made, the charge is repeated in the last number of the "Quarterly Review," apparently by the same writer who first brought it forward. He says, Lord Brougham "produces no evidence except as to the actual contents of the Hume papers. They came but lately into the hands of their present possessors ; and we think it might have occurred to Lord Brougham as not altogether impossible (considering the late Mr. Baron Hume's refusal to let any use be made of them during his own lifetime), that the learned judge purified the collection before he bequeathed it to the Royal Society of Edinburgh." The reviewer also cites the passage, which we have already quoted, from Hume's letter to Colonel Edmonstone, advising a clerical friend not to abandon his profession because he had become a skeptic, as affording "an inference in tolerable harmony with the rumor so magisterially dismissed." Our readers will observe, however, that this grave charge, first made upon the authority of mere rumor, is here repeated as a matter of inference only ; and though the reviewer, it appears, has "had access to some of Hume's unpublished letters," it does not appear that he found in them any direct evidence of the truth of the accusation.

give him all his due. There is such an evenness of merit, such a graceful and sustained propriety, and so much freedom from striking faults in Robertson's historical writings, that his works, which travelled up at once to the highest popularity, have ever since kept their place in the general esteem. It is curious to contrast his enthusiastic reception with the cold reception given at first to the great work of Hume. Of the first volume of the "History of England," containing the reigns of James the First, and Charles the First, only five-and-forty copies were sold in London the year after it came from the press, though it treated of a period of history most exciting in its interest, and, the writer's careless inquiry into facts not having then been discovered, was fitted, one would suppose, by its animated grace of manner and living charm of language, to eclipse all other writings of the kind in the public eye. It gives a pleasing impression of Hume's disposition, that, conscious as he must have been of his own superiority, he could bear thus to be cast into the shade. He wrote a letter of humorous reproach to Robertson, complaining, that, when he was sitting in glory at the feet of Smollett (of whose history he had the meanest opinion), the author of the "History of Scotland" should have pressed himself above him and come nearer to their great master than he. But Robertson, if inferior to his friend in sagacity and comprehension, was entitled to success by his laborious accuracy. So far as his means of information went, he was conscientiously faithful; he was employed at least six years in his first work, while Hume despatched his history of the Stuarts in less than three; though the amount of materials to be consulted, the conflict of authorities, and the obstacles in the way of accuracy were, in this latter case, a thousand to one, compared with the other.

While Lord Brougham somewhat overestimates the excellence of Robertson's writings, he is not blind to his defects. It is refreshing to learn that he finds fault with him in one respect, and that is, for the deference which he pays to what the world, much to its own loss and injury, is pleased to call greatness, and the indemnity which he is willing to concede to heroes, tyrants, and similar nuisances of mankind. Historians appear, by common consent, to have taken might for right; and courage, frankness, wisdom, or decision of

character, has been sufficient, at their tribunal, to save the offender from the condemnation of every sin. It is disgusting in the extreme to hear the butcher of his wives, the most brutal of sovereigns, treated with hearty and sympathizing regard, as jolly old King Harry ; and when the Chancellor comes on Robertson and Hume with his long and sweeping scourge for their courtier-like homage to the memory of Elizabeth, we feel that the infliction is richly deserved. Not that we consider him particularly discriminating on these occasions. He seems to take it for granted with respect to Mary Stuart, that her marriage with Bothwell was sufficient proof of all that was alleged against her ; when those who examine the subject will see, as we have set forth in a former number,* that she could not possibly have been accessory to the murder of her husband ; in a word, that she was never stained with blood, whatever her subsequent weakness may have been. Not so with Elizabeth ; it is beyond question, that, thinking the slow poison of imprisonment was not enough, she attempted to prevail on Drury and Paulet to murder the unhappy queen ; and not succeeding in this, she resorted to the meanest falsehood and imposture to accomplish that infernal deed. Well says the Chancellor : “ History, fertile in royal crimes, offers to our execration few such characters as this great, successful, and popular princess. An assassin in her heart, — nay, in her counsels and orders ; an oppressor of the most unrelenting cruelty in her whole conduct ; a hypocritical dissembler, to whom falsehood was habitual, honest frankness strange ; — such is the light in which she ought ever to be held up, as long as truth and humanity shall bear any value in the eyes of men.” If there were any substance to the fiction, that the Chancellor has the conscience of the sovereign in his keeping, and if a human being *in* office could feel as he does when *out* of it, we could wish that his Lordship was still presiding in the Court of Chancery, not of England only, but of the literary world.

In speaking of the “ History of America,” which followed that of Scotland, Lord Brougham sails away in a flight of enthusiasm which was hardly to be expected from such a veteran ; not that he prefers it as a whole to the

* *N. A. Review*, Vol. XXXIV., p. 144.

other histories ; but he thinks that there are passages and descriptions in it which neither its author nor any other historian ever exceeded ; and he evidently has no kind feeling towards Irving for attempting the portrait of Columbus, which Robertson had drawn before him. The Chancellor makes a contrast between the passages in which the two writers describe the first discovery of land by the great navigator, greatly to the disparagement of the American, whose account he considers ambitious and straining after effect, and therefore far less impressive than the noble simplicity of the other. Robertson's description of that memorable scene is certainly good ; better even than Southey's slight attempt in " Madoc " to bring before the reader that moment which opened a new history to the world. But Lord Brougham, whose temperament does not always incline to laudation, has gone somewhat beyond himself in this eulogy, treating the absence of faults as a striking beauty, and imagining graces more than are really there. He says that he once called the attention of Lord Wellesley to this passage ; and that nobleman afterwards assured him that he shed tears while he read it, and it had broken his rest at night. Perhaps it may be the hardness brought over our hearts by the constant practice of reviewing, but we must plead guilty to reading it with dry eyes ; nor are we often moved to tears by simple and judicious writing ; while, on the contrary, we almost weep aloud over the vicious affectation and vulgar elegance which Bulwer and his company have imposed upon the world as refined and intellectual writing. We enjoy a compensation for this obtuseness, however, in the fact, that we are not kept awake by the better parts of the books which our public capacity requires us to read ; and when we sit down to the greater proportion of them, particularly the popular novels of the day, it brings over us a spirit of repose, a dreamless and heavy slumber, in which we forget the toil and warfare of our vocation, and subside into peace and charity with all mankind.

While we are not much inclined to disagree with Lord Brougham in his critical decisions, we greatly honor the spirit in which he speaks of the manner in which all history has been written. Historians who know better, and who ought to guide the moral sentiments of their readers, have fallen into the common train of feeling, regarding all peaceful

scenes and virtues with comparative indifference, and exalting ability and guilt into most unmerited glory. He sharply censures, too, as well he may, the irregular and inconsistent manner in which they dispense their condemnation and applause ; exalting to the skies the bloody ambition of the Plantagenets and the crooked policy of the Tudors, while Richard the Third, a man of greater courage and capacity, and about as amiable, is the target for every broadside of indignation, which, for the sake of appearances, they think it necessary sometimes to throw in. There is, however, one objection to severe moral judgment, which did not occur to the Chancellor's legal mind. When an English admiral once remonstrated with the Dey of Algiers respecting the lawless conduct of his soldiers, that sovereign admitted that the complaint was well founded, and said that he had earnestly endeavoured to make a reform, having, with that view, hanged as many as fifty in a day ; but he had found, though he evidently saw no other objection to the process, that he could not very well spare the men. Similar considerations may have induced historians to be merciful to the wholesale robbers and murderers of the human race ; for so general has been the tendency to such practices, and so few are there among those distinguished in history who have not something of the kind to answer for, that strictness to mark and censure such iniquity would turn history into a sort of Old Bailey chronicle ; writers, who now exult in their pride of place, would become literary hangmen under the moral law ; and the men usually most admired and honored in the annals of their country must necessarily be their victims. He says, that he himself once undertook the reigns of Alfred, Henry the Fifth, and Elizabeth, with a view to the right application of moral principles to history, and was prevented from completing the task only by his growing public and professional labors. We regret that he did not persevere ; in his hands, Alfred would have been duly honored for his intellectual energy and civil wisdom ; France would have found a late atonement for her wrongs in the chastisement inflicted on the martial shade of Henry ; while dire and unchivalrous would have been his lashes on the shoulders of Queen Bess, “ a model of falsehood in all its more hateful and despicable forms, who had all the guilt of murder on her head, and was only saved from its actual perpetration

by having a Paulet for her agent instead of a Tyrrel." It is much to be desired, that some arm of power would bring about this revolution, vast and sweeping though it would be, dashing down the statues which now sit on thrones in human estimation and public annals, and calling from weakness into power, and from dishonor into glory, many who, in their own and succeeding times, have seldom been honored with the applause which they well deserve.

Dr. Robertson's life was marked in every part by a dignified moderation, which does not give a very animated interest to his biography, but implies more character, and requires more energy to sustain, than is generally supposed. It is easy to give way to feeling, to let the passions loose, and to throw one's self headlong into the rushing tide of party. And this is what passes for force of character with mankind, who are apt to mistake the noise and smoke of the engines for the great moving power. But while sudden effects and transient impressions are produced by men of impulse, who spend their strength in irregular and violent exertions, the best services in the cause of humanity, and by far the most enduring results, may be traced in the world's history to men of moderation, of whom Washington was an example. They are not rightly estimated by those about them, and succeeding times are slow to acknowledge them as great. Flaring candles on the earth outshine the brightest stars in heaven for a season ; but the former are soon burnt out, while the planets are shining on for ever. We should not assign Dr. Robertson a place among the highest of this class, by any means ; but he, like the rest, has been underestimated by those who confound moderation with mediocrity, — who believe, that, in the warfare of life, all depends, not on strength, but shouting, — and expect to overthrow the strongholds of vice and oppression like Jericho, not by siege and battery, but by sounding their ram's horns under the walls.

The next portrait in the Chancellor's gallery brings us out of the region of historians into that of philosophers. The first presented is Black, the great chemical discoverer, whose name has been surrounded with a sort of obscurity much in contrast with his distinguished claims, and rather strange, considering how deeply science is indebted to him for some of its greatest advances. It is explained

by the fact, that he was modest and unpretending, content to be great, and not solicitous that men should acknowledge his worth ; manifesting thereby that confidence which is so much more common in scientific than in literary men, that the world would do him justice at last, however his merits might for a time be misunderstood. When he was young, he printed a Latin thesis, containing the intimation of some of his discoveries. One of the copies was presented by his father, then in Bordeaux, to Montesquieu, who said to him, “ I rejoice with you, my good friend ; your son will be the honor of your name and family ” ; a prediction, which, whether inspired by French politeness or a true discernment, was afterwards well fulfilled. There is something very interesting in Lord Brougham’s description of the man, of his graceful manner in lecturing, the easy confidence with which he made his experiments, the unlabored elegance of his extemporaneous speaking, and the philosophical views and suggestions with which he chained the attention of his hearers. His Lordship says, that “ the commanding periods of Pitt’s majestic oratory,” “ the vehemence of Fox’s burning declamation,” “ the close compacted chain of Grant’s pure reasoning,” “ the mingled fancy, epigram, and argumentation of Plunket,” have given him less delight than he felt in attending those lectures, when “ the first philosopher of the age ” was giving forth his own discoveries, recounting the successive steps by which he had reached them, and pointing out the difficulties triumphantly overcome.

There are generally many who are walking together in the paths of science, nearly abreast of each other ; and as they have each mastered the successive steps which lead up to a great discovery, it is not easy always to say to whom the honor of making it rightfully belongs. There are also individuals who are fully capable of estimating what others have done, and not too scrupulously self-denying to appropriate to themselves a share of it. Nations, too, appear to consider claims of this kind to be maintained like points of public honor, with as little regard as may be to honesty and truth. Lord Brougham belabors the memory of Lavoisier, as one of those kind-hearted people, who, when he found that the parent of a discovery seemed to care but little for his offspring, had too tender a heart to see it wander as an orphan, and, as a duty of humanity, adopted it as his own.

Happily, Dr. Black was not defrauded in this way as much as many others have been ; the great French chemist being a schoolboy when he made his discovery of fixed air, to which the science owes its great subsequent progress. He was not sensitive on the subject of fame. He found his enjoyment in the literary society of Edinburgh, which was then of a high order ; and though his readiness to communicate his speculations to others, and his indifference to his own renown, exposed him to this kind of plunder, the traits of character which such conduct implies belong to those virtues which bring with them a satisfaction that more than compensates any loss or sacrifice which they require.

To Dr. Black chemistry is indebted for the discovery, that the air which forms the atmosphere is not the only permanently elastic body, but that others exist, which are capable of union with solids or fluids, from which they can be separated and restored to their former state. This led him to the knowledge of fixed air, which others had observed in effervescence and fermentation, but supposed it to be nothing more than common air, in some impure combinations. "Once the truth was made known, that there are other gases in nature, only careful observation was necessary to find them out." So it pleases his Lordship to express himself, with a brave independence of the common law of the English tongue. He says, that Dr. Black was well acquainted with the nature of hydrogen gas, and that, as early as 1766, he invented an air-balloon, and exhibited to his friends the ascent of a bladder filled with inflammable air. In 1763, he observed the fact, that, in the melting of ice, more heat seems to disappear than is indicated by the thermometer, and that, when steam is condensed, there is an unexpected proportion of heat. By investigating the reasons of these appearances, he was conducted to his second great discovery, of "latent heat." His third discovery was that of the capacity of bodies for heat, — "specific heat" as it has since been called. He thus gave an impulse to chemistry, exalting it to the dignity of a science, which it had never held before ; and the fame of his success encouraged others to choose it as a field, which might be explored with honor to themselves and benefit to the world.

There is a great deal of interest in little circumstances connected with the appearance and personal habits of such a

man. His features were singularly intelligent and graceful, his high forehead and temples covered with snowy hair, his expression calm, as suited his manner and speech, but, at the same time, kind and interesting. His eye was so correct, and his hand so steady, that in the most delicate experiments there was never any failure of success ; and, what is uncommon on such occasions, the table at the close of his lecture was as neat as when he began. The same quiet calmness went with him to the close of life. Having neither wife nor family, he dreaded the prospect of illness and its accompaniments more than the last hour itself. These he was entirely spared. His strength gradually declined, without apparent sickness or pain ; and he passed from life so quietly, at last, as not to spill a cup of milk and water, his customary dinner, which he was holding in his hand at the moment, and which rested undisturbed on his knee. His attendants left him in this posture, and it was not till they returned, and found him sitting exactly as before, that they became aware that he was dead.

Another great name in this department of science is that of Cavendish, who, though connected with the Duke of Devonshire, and enjoying a splendid estate, had an intellectual taste and energy which carried him above the temptations incident to birth and fortune, into that high sphere where only the truly noble are found. Perfectly indifferent to luxuries and common gratifications, and living in the society of his books and philosophical apparatus, he appeared, like Black, so much more desirous to be than to seem a benefactor to science, that he cared but little for his discoveries when they were once made, and had no ambition to publish his triumphs to the world. He was obliged to make even greater efforts to keep himself in private life, than others to push themselves before the public eye. His family, aware of his talents, were anxious that, as the grandson of a duke, he should make himself distinguished in public affairs. Their displeasure had no effect to change his purpose ; and an uncle, disapproving the course which they pursued towards him, and respecting his moral steadiness, left him heir to his own property, amounting to a million and a half sterling. Very few are the heads which would not have been turned by such a windfall ; he was, like Æsop's traveller, tried by the storm and sunshine, save that the sunbeams of pros-

perity could not induce him to throw off the garment which the tempest of persecution had shown itself unable to tear away. This clear discernment of his own gifts and powers, this determination to follow out his vocation, and this superiority to common enjoyments and honors, would be enough to stamp him with the seal of eminence, even if he had never succeeded in unfolding some of the deep mysteries of nature, and thus in commanding the respect and gratitude of men.

The great discovery of Cavendish was that of the composition of water, for which Lavoisier was inclined to take to himself the larger share of credit ; but which, according to Lord Brougham, had been previously made by Watt, the celebrated improver of the steam-engine, a man of great philosophical genius, and active and efficient in many departments of science besides his own. We have here a life of Watt, also, written with an intimate knowledge of the nature and value of the improvements to which he owed his fame, and also with an interest in the subject inspired by an acquaintance with the man. He was originally connected with the University of Glasgow, as a maker of mathematical instruments, in which task he showed powers far above the sphere of mechanical employment, though in this also he excelled. There chanced to be, among the apparatus of the University, a steam-engine of old fashion, which never could be made to work well ; and, being employed to find a remedy for its disorders, he was led to reflect upon its construction, and the manner in which it could be made efficient and turned to account, beyond what it ever had been, in the operations of industry and the general service of mankind.

Lord Brougham despatches in a summary manner the history of this great invention. The first step was that of Solomon de Caus, in 1615, who found means to raise water by converting part of it into steam, and using the expansive force to act upon the rest of the water. But his contrivance, however ingenious, did not approach much nearer than the tea-kettle, which was still more ancient, to the steam-engine of the present day. Another step was made by the Marquis of Worcester, and recorded in his "*Century of the Names and Scantlings of Inventions*," a work described by Hume—who, like some of our brethren, found it easier occasionally to review books than to read them—as a

“compound of lies,” probably because the Marquis was a public character, and the political atmosphere is apt to be composed in great part of the element described in that short and unceremonious name. But while his political inventions as Earl of Glamorgan, whatever they may have been, perished with the using, like others of the kind, his scientific suggestions are likely, like the wings of the inventor in *Rasselas*, to keep him floating above the tide of time, under which so many statesmen of his day have gone down. The Marquis, and Caus before him, applied the steam directly to the water, or whatever else it might be, which it was intended to raise. It was Papin, so well known by his digester, who, in 1690, suggested the application of the steam to a piston, and the use of atmospheric pressure; and this conception, though he does not seem to have reduced it to practice, and has not been exalted as one of the chief originators of this great instrument, seems to us to be the point where the history of the steam-engine began. He also suggested the safety-valve, which Desaguliers afterwards constructed. It was Newcomen, an iron-master of Dartmouth, who, in 1711, first constructed an engine with a piston and a condensing process, though he depended on atmospheric pressure, and not on the force of steam, for his power. This was the engine which Watt was employed to examine at the University; and such as it was, with some small improvements, it had remained stationary for fifty years, sometimes employed to raise water from mines, but giving no intimation of the distinguished part which it was afterwards to play in the works and ways of men.

The first great invention of Watt was one which saved three fourths of the fuel which had been used. The injection of cold water in the process of condensing also cooled the cylinder so much as to require a great expense of heat to restore and maintain its temperature. Watt employed a separate vessel for condensing, by which means the cylinder was kept hot, while the condenser only was cooled; and thus he saved three fourths of the fuel, and increased the power one fourth, making every pound of coal do five times as much service as before. In attempting to remove the air which lessened the heat, he was led to introduce the steam from the boiler into the upper part of the cylinder, thus not only making the upper cavity air-tight, but also aiding the

descent of the piston, which formerly descended by the pressure of the air alone. This was the second improvement ; the third consisted in dispensing with the counterpoise at the pump-rod, and admitting steam into the cylinder to force the piston upwards ; thus making it, for the first time, a steam-engine in reality, by resorting to steam alone for the action and efficiency of every part.

But this is no place for going through with the history of his improvements ; it is enough to say, that he made the engine in substance what it is now. It is grievous to think that his experience was the same with that of most other great inventors ; *sic vos non vobis* ; some knavish plunderers always stand ready to appropriate to themselves the benefit of other men's genius and skill. It is melancholy to see the want, not merely of generosity, but of common honesty, in relation to this subject. The conscience keeps time with the law, and if any means can be found for evading the provisions of the law, any false keys to open its doors, there is nothing to prevent the worthless pirate from fleecing his upright and honored victim. Dr. Forsyth, the inventor of the percussion lock, passed the fourteen years of his patent right in courts of justice, prevailing in every suit. But nothing could be exacted from the base invaders of his right, who were as poor in substance as ragged in honor, and he never gained one shilling by an invention which is now universally used. Lord Brougham says, that, if Watt had taken out no patent, and trusted only to the preference which would have been given him, he would have secured far more profit, and have saved years of dreary and hopeless litigation, from which he was not freed by a decision of the court till long after all his interest in the patent had expired by the lapse of time. We often hear of the uncertainty of the law ; but the complaint does not apply to cases of this kind ; in which there is more than sufficient certainty of losing comfort, patience, and temper, not to speak of the rewards of labor and skill, and of gaining a verdict when it can do little more than a gravestone to help the repose of the dead.

As we have said, this eminent man had directed his attention to chemical experiments, and, as early as 1782, had discovered the composition of water. Cavendish, without the least knowledge of Watt's experiments, made the same discovery in 1784, but had not then, as Lord Brougham de-

clares, after a full examination, so clear a comprehension of the true doctrine as Watt had expressed before him. Cavendish was not likely to learn any thing which was not before the public on a printed page. In all his habits, he was painfully shy and reserved, hating to be spoken to, and, when he was directly addressed, often leaving the place with a sort of discordant cry, not particularly creditable to his good manners, though it simply indicated the owl's embarrassment when exposed to the light of day. He received no one at his house, and had so little communication by speech with his domestics, that he ordered his dinner by a note left on the hall table. He even contrived to die without the trouble of attendants about him. Finding his strength failing, he desired to be left alone. His servant, returning after a time, was again reminded that his room was more welcome than his company ; and before another intrusion troubled him, he was gone from the lonely world. With this unsocial existence the life of Watt was strongly contrasted. Exemplary and affectionate in the domestic and social relations, animated and powerful in conversation, with an easy playful humor, he was welcomed into the first circles of Edinburgh by such men as Horner, Playfair, and Scott ; and it was remarked of him by Lord Jeffrey, that in no other person could there be found so " fine an expression of reposing strength and uninterrupted self-possession as marked his whole manner." To the last, he retained his energy of mind and his interest in all about him, and died in his eighty-fourth year, full of gratitude to Heaven for the measure of blessings which he had been permitted to enjoy.

The name of Priestley, which follows, is great in the annals of science, but is better known to the world by his theological opinions ; and, though unblessed by many, and defended by comparatively few, it has fought its way to the universal acknowledgment, that he was a man of blameless life, of generous affections, and that, whatever may have been his success in finding the truth, he at least pursued it in singleness of heart. He was detested as a politician by the conservatives of his day, who saw in the French Revolution, which gave him so much joy, nothing but a curse to the world. He was suspected and feared by theologians, as one who was desirous to ruin the souls of others, having already done that service for his own ; and the utmost reach of their

charity could extend only to the wish, that he would confine himself to his laboratory instead of turning the world upside down by his speculations. They could not see, what is now so clear, that "we have no right to doubt his conscientious motives, the more especially as his heterodox dogmas, always manfully avowed, never brought him any thing but vexation and injury in his temporal concerns." But the general feeling is now softened throughout the Christian world. It may be doubted whether Priestley would at this day be rejected by any church, and thrown into deep distress, as he was in his youth, by reason of his inability to feel contrition for Adam's sin. All now required would be penitence for his personal offences, leaving Adam, like other people, to answer for his own.

There never was a man of disposition more cheerful, social, and undaunted ; and endless as his controversies were, having, like other controversies, very little of the beauty of holiness about them, he might congratulate himself, like Hume, that "he had no enemy, except perhaps the Whigs, and the Tories, and all the Christian world." His amiable manners disarmed the hostility of all who came near him ; and when he was fiercely contesting the eternity of future torments, his adversaries almost wished, for his sake, that the doctrine might not be true. Of his publications, which amounted to one hundred and forty-one in number, only seventeen are on scientific matters. Many relate to general subjects ; for such was his activity of mind, that he took a quick and deep interest in every thing which came before him. By far the greater part are theological, which accounts, as Lord Brougham says, for his now having few readers ; not many holding all his peculiar tenets, while, as to some doctrines, he himself composed the whole rank and file of his party.

It does not appear what directed his mind to the subject of chemistry ; but he made it his study, and endeavoured early in life to obtain a professorship of it ; for which situation, he says, he was then poorly fitted. But surely he could have qualified himself, as well as Watson did, after he had assumed the trust. When Priestley resided at Leeds, the building next his house was a brewery, which led him to make observations on "fixed air." In the course of these experiments, he became acquainted with nitrogen gas, or, as he calls it,

“phlogistic air,” which was discovered by him and Dr. Rutherford at the same time, without communication with each other. But on the 1st of August, 1774, he made the discovery of “oxygen,” which, beyond all contest or contradiction, was entirely his own. Lavoisier claimed it, as having occurred to himself and Priestley at the same time ; but Lord Brougham despatches the claim in a few words ; “ he never discovered it till Priestley discovered it to him.” Besides these, he discovered the gases of muriatic, sulphuric, and fluoric acids, ammoniacal gas, and nitrous oxide gas. He was obliged to construct his own instruments, often with his own hands, which he did with great skill. His peculiar character was shown by the manner in which he held to the doctrine of phlogiston, after the rest of the world had rejected it ; and “ that his belief was perfectly disinterested, no man can doubt ; the discoverer of oxygen and of the true cause of respiration had, of all men, the strongest interest in assenting to a theory which was wholly founded on his own discovery, and which made him the immediate, as Black was the more remote, author of modern chemical science.” But, whatever the temptation, he maintained the old doctrine bravely to the last.

The most brilliant and familiar name in the history of chemistry is that of Sir Humphrey Davy, whose life was as prosperous as that of Priestley was troubled, though it may be doubted whether the circumstances of wealth, quiet, and popular admiration, which he enjoyed, were really beneficial either to his happiness or his fame. Lord Brougham, though rather reserved in drawing his private character, intimates that he was not pleased to be reminded of the obscurity from which he sprang. A vain-glorious boast of one’s self-elevation is offensive ; but if a great man is really ashamed of his humble beginnings, the feeling must arise from a peculiar kind of vanity, implying something unsound in his heart. When he first came to London, he was uncouth and ungraceful in his bearing ; but he soon acquired sufficient courtly self-possession to command the applause of his audiences. For a time, he seemed intoxicated with this success, as it was unfitly called ; but it is not the breath of ladies’ fans, that can fill one’s sails for immortality ; and though Davy afterwards lived much in society, he devoted himself to that earnest pursuit of science, which alone could

sustain his reputation, and which led to those discoveries that are now the glory of his name. It is on these discoveries alone that Davy's great reputation must ultimately depend ; for his published works on scientific subjects, though, proceeding from such a source, they could not be without value, are not by any means equal to his fame. His later writings, "*Salmonia*" and "*The Last Days of a Philosopher*," came from his pen after he had suffered from an apoplectic seizure, which, however slight, is generally felt as the touch of death. He submitted to great labor, not to speak of serious dangers, in making his experiments ; but the labor of writing is of a different kind, much less exciting, and requiring, not impulse, but still and patient determination, as we, in our critical capacity, have sufficient reason to know. He was fond of society, though English in his manners ; that is, shy and reserved, covering with a somewhat supercilious bearing the conscious want of self-possession. But he was also fond to enthusiasm of natural scenery, a taste which implies a certain degree of refinement ; though Lord Brougham represents him as indifferent as the Chancellor himself is to the fine arts, and willing to confess that deficiency which others so ambitiously conceal.

Much has recently been said of the failure of his "safety lamp," which, when first invented, was so warmly hailed as a perfect security against those terrible firedamp explosions in mines, by which so many lives were destroyed. The free use of this lamp he generously gave to the public, without securing to himself any benefit from the invention. It seems very strange, that, after thirty years' experience of its value, without any suspicion arising that the safeguard was not complete, it should all at once be found useless. One cannot help thinking, that the fault is less in the lamp itself than in the carelessness of those who use it, men, for the most part, very indifferent to dangers and precautions. But we are told, that the lamp, which in a still atmosphere affords a perfect security, does not prevent a current of air from passing through the meshes of the wire to the flame, and so causing an explosion. Had the inventor lived, he would doubtless have found means to obviate this objection, which is serious, because, in mining, currents of air often come without any possible warning. But such failures cannot be common ; for Lord Brougham says that a great engineer

bore testimony before a parliamentary committee, that he had seen a thousand, and sometimes fifteen hundred, safety lamps in daily use, and in every possible variety of explosive mixtures, and never had known a solitary instance of an explosion. So, then, the value of the invention is undeniable, and the amount of security which it affords is beyond all price, even if there are circumstances in which it is not complete.

Without saying any thing of the life of Simson, the mathematician, which closes this first volume, we shall only express our satisfaction at seeing these portraits executed by so eminent a hand. Even if they had no other value, they would make us acquainted with the opinions of the writer, who is as much a subject of interest as any individual whose lineaments he has drawn. He shows a familiarity with the details of science, of the mathematics particularly, which could hardly be expected after the busy and tumultuous life which he has led. This cannot be a mere remnant of early education ; he must have given to these pursuits the same sort of attention which English statesmen generally devote to classical studies and recollections. And the effect is seen in his oratory, as reported, where strength and energy abound, while grace and elegance are wanting. His style is bold and manly, though sometimes strangely careless and lounging ; but it is always expressive of his mind and heart, and through the most labyrinthian sentence it is always easy to follow the sentiments and reasoning of the writer. These are strong in favor of liberality, truth, and freedom ; too strong to be relished always by the blind adorers of the past. It is not to be denied, that there is here and there some slight want of Christian meekness ; but his buffets are generally bestowed on those who deserve them. He abounds in *un-friends*, as the Scotch call them, having carried on for years a large and successful manufacture of that article, which few desire to possess. But on the whole, we say, *Serus in cælum redeat* ; — if that be his destination, which the persons last mentioned will be inclined to question ; — and whenever he departs, let it be remembered, that he lifted his heavy war-club on the side of liberty and toleration, and struck many a crushing blow at the enemies of truth and virtue, while soundly belaboring his own.